

12/19/2023 Troy Rider: Public Comment for the General Assistance Emergency Housing Task Force

My name is Troy Rider, I would like to submit a public comment for the General Assistance Emergency Housing Task Force. I would like someone to read this for me, I will not be able to come for the public comment period. I want to start by urging the task force to recommend keeping people sheltered until they find permanent housing. Also, it is very important for people with health conditions and disabilities to have access for reasonable accommodations both to stay sheltered and to use hotels or shelters that adequately meet their needs.

After my 80 days ran out, I was forced to sleep in a car. I have insulin dependent diabetes and I at the time had to use 100% oxygen. While sleeping in the car, I got a blood infection from the impacts of sleeping outside and also I did not have access to my insulin. I had surgery on my legs for the blood clots. However, I was discharged from the surgery to my car. Three weeks later, my heart began to give out and it turns out that was because there was a blood infection throughout my entire body. The blood infection had deteriorated a heart valve and the infection had gotten to my mouth and teeth. In order for them to repair my heart, they had to remove all of my teeth so that they could try to kill the infection before the heart surgery. The doctors told me that there was a chance that I would not come out of it. That scared me.

They realized that I needed a double bypass as well. I could not have any of these surgeries until the infection was gone. I finally had the surgery and thankfully survived, but with my teeth and having had a severe illness that could have been avoided if I had been sheltered.

In September, my authorized representative, asked the Department of Children and Families for a reasonable accommodation to remain sheltered. That accommodation was denied. As a result of being unsheltered, my health significantly declined and I lost all my teeth and had to have major surgery.

I was discharged from the Hospital after the heart surgery, once again without a voucher. The room that I could have used and was given a reasonable accommodation for on Dec. 1st, was now full and the department had taken out of use many available rooms. I only finally became sheltered after December 1st on December 16th. When I was discharged, my authorized representative explained to me that the ESD was now only giving reasonable accommodation to people in wheelchairs. I had just had a double bi pass, a blood infection and multiple surgeries and now she was not sure I would qualify for a reasonable accommodation. I decided that I did not want to go through that and be denied, so, instead we worked every day to get me back in.

I am still hooked up to IV pumps and I was discharged without a voucher. I have to change those myself and that is impossible to do outside. And I will be hooked up for a long time.

There are a lot of people in this program with many kinds of health conditions and disabilities. The federal law allows us access to these programs and gives administrators the tools to make reasonable accommodations. It is frustrating that there is not recognition of the states ability to

make a reasonable accommodation and for me, that meant declining health, multiple surgeries and permanent changes to my body. No one should ever be faced with life or death just because they are experiencing homelessness.

It is cold out and people have died, I hope that the task force will make recommendations that no longer send people to live outside.